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THEORETICAL PREREQUISITES FOR SECOND-LANGUAGE TEACHING.

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SOUND LANGUAGE TEACHING RESTS ON THREE THEORETICAL BASES. THE FIRST OF THESE, A HYPOTHESIS OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION, MAY BE ORIENTED TOWARD THE COGNITIVE APPROACH OR THE PERCEPTIVE APPROACH OR MAY REFLECT THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE BEHAVIORIST. THE SECOND, A MODEL OF GRAMMAR, MAY BE THE PRODUCT OF THE TRADITIONALIST, THE STRUCTURALIST, THE TRANSFORMATIONALIST OR THE TAGMEMICIST. THESE THEORETICIANS IN TURN INFLUENCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE THIRD CONCEPT, A STRATEGY FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING THAT TAKES IN ALL OF THE VARIETIES OF THE "DIRECT METHOD" AS WELL AS THE CONTRASTIVE LINGUISTIC SYSTEM. NO ONE OF THESE THEORIES EXPLAINS ALL GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES, BUT TRANSFORMATIONAL-GENERATIVE GRAMMAR SEEMS TO HAVE MORE LOGIC AND FEWER LIMITATIONS THAN THE OTHERS. THEREFORE, IT IS PREFERABLE TO FOLLOW AN ECLECTIC PLAN BASED ON A COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING OF ALL SYSTEMS USED.
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THEORETICAL PREREQUISITES FOR SECOND-LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Pour guider la pratique pédagogique on a besoin de trois théories:

- **Une hypothèse sur l'acquisition du langage. Cette hypothèse peut être de nature *behaviourist*, cognitive ou perceptuelle.**
- **Un modèle de grammaire traditionaliste, structuraliste, "tagmémique" ou transformationnel.**
- **Une stratégie d'enseignement des langues, dérivée des deux théories précédentes. Des considérations générales et d'ordre théorique influeront sur le genre d'exercices et de travaux pratiques préféré par l'enseignant.**

Les modèles linguistiques qui ont cours actuellement n'ont pas tous la même valeur explicative; la théorie transformationnelle s'avère plus complète, plus puissante que les autres. Mais chacune peut faire son apport à l'enseignement des langues. Il incombe à l'enseignant de pratiquer un sage éclecticisme fondé sur une bonne connaissance des théories en présence.

Für die pädagogische Praxis des Fremdsprachenunterrichts sind drei Theorien notwendig:

- **Eine Hypothese über den Spracherwerb. Sie kann ihrer Natur nach behavioristisch, erkenntnis- oder wahrnehmungspsychologisch sein.**
- **Ein Grammatikmodell, traditionalistischer, strukturalistischer, tagmemischer oder transformationeller Natur.**
- **Ein Konzept für den Sprachunterricht, das von den beiden erwähnten Theorien abgeleitet ist. Allgemeine und theoretische Überlegungen werden die Art der vom Unterrichtenden bevorzugten Übungen und praktischen Arbeiten beeinflussen.**

Die zur Zeit aktuellen linguistischen Modelle haben nicht alle den gleichen beschreibenden Wert; die transformationelle Theorie stellt sich als vollständiger und vermögender heraus als die übrigen. Aber jede kann das ihre zum Fremdsprachenunterricht beitragen. Es liegt beim Unterrichtenden, einen weisen Eklektizismus zu praktizieren, der auf eine gute Kenntnis der vorliegenden Theorien gegründet sein muß.

Theory without practice is sterile: practice without theory is blind. If our purpose in teaching is to produce an intensive, comprehensive and economical course, an explicit theory ought ideally to inform the content of the lessons. Actually, three theories are necessary: a hypothesis of language acquisition, a model of grammar, and a strategy for second-language teaching (as different from or as the same as mother-tongue teaching).

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A Hypothesis of Language Acquisition

How does one learn language (in general, not a particular one)? This problem belongs as much to psychology as to linguistics. If language acquisition is seen from the behaviourist point of view, learning becomes a bundle of acquired responses elicited by the relevant stimuli and then appropriately "reinforced" or "rewarded". Applied to language teaching, this school of thought would emphasise habit-formation; and so we may justify pattern practice, overlearnt until the correct structure is automaticized and removed from the realm of conscious formulation. The keynote in this approach is the drill rather than the explanation; teaching the rule is discounted (although not necessarily ignored completely) in favour of practising the pattern.

If a cognitive approach is adopted, the emphasis in teaching is then on the explanation of the rule, with examples deduced from that rule. The pupil is expected to apprehend the principles underlying the actual pattern directly, rather than perceive them inductively through meeting and practising numerous examples. This latter process of arriving at knowledge from exemplificatory induction can be termed the "perceptive" approach and lies, from the point of view of language-acquisition theory, between cognition and habit-formation.

A cognitive approach would relegate drill to a minor role indeed, useful mainly for testing purposes; all the effort would be put into the presentation (explanation) and exploitation (development) of the structure.

A Model of Grammar

The kind of exercise given to a pupil depends in part on the model of grammatical description (traditional, structuralist, transformational, tagmemic, etc.) accepted by the teacher. To be consistent, an out-and-out structuralist (of the Fries school, perhaps) ought not to use exercises changing sentences from active to passive, for example. The immediate-constituent analysis of active and passive sentences is quite distinct and the underlying deep similarity of form and meaning between the two voices is non-observable in the final derived morphophonemic realization. In other words, there is no apparent *structural* connection between "The boy kicks the ball" and "The ball is kicked by the boy"; and the structuralist is precluded by the terms of his model from seeking those non-visible "strings" which do show that the passive is derived from the active, since he sees himself bound to describe only sentences that are actually produced (i. e. read or heard). The teacher drilling his pupils in converting active to passive is willy-nilly a transformationalist – otherwise, there is no theoretical justification for this kind of drill.

A Strategy for Second-Language Teaching

Finally, the teacher's views on language theory should also pervade his pedagogical practice. Will he see the process as more or less identical with that of

native-language learning? Many varieties of the "Direct Method" or the "Natural Method" do just this. If so, he relies on lexical repetitions (since mother-tongue vocabulary is learnt from hearing its items time and time again), intuitive generalizations (the learner constructs his own rules from "guesswork" = linguistic feeling) and exposure to all the structures of the target language in a quite ungraded manner. Michael West's "New Method" series for teaching English as a foreign language is a classic example of this approach.

Or will he deliberately base his teaching on contrastive linguistics? Will he compare the target and the native languages and so utilize the pupils' knowledge of and competence in their mother-tongue? If so, he will encourage the transfer of first-language habits where the structures are the same or similar (whether as linguistic universals or simply the more limited similarities of cognate tongues), and will concentrate his drills and patterns on those areas where the languages differ. This approach is advocated by the Lado-Fries school in America.

What is the grammar of English?

However, few teachers are sufficiently qualified in linguistics to be capable of constructing drills according to a specific model: at the same time, many linguists are pedagogically naive and are so constrained by their theories that their teaching materials are completely lacking in interest and meaning. What is theoretically correct is not always pedagogically convenient: *a logical model is not co-extensive with a working model.*

Furthermore, since professional linguists are in any case not agreed amongst themselves, the teacher runs the risk of using teaching materials, implicitly or explicitly constructed according to a certain theory, which prove in the end to reflect *ad hoc* impressions instead of grammar rules of general validity. These materials will fail even in the measure of "weak generative capacity", to use Chomsky's terminology: they will not produce all the sentences of the language. That is to say, they will not even have that "observational adequacy" of structuralist linguistics, which does present the surface structure, though it goes no deeper.

Yet even if one adopts Chomsky's ideas and accepts the grammatical concept of "descriptive adequacy", which possesses "strong generative capacity" and so, theoretically, can generate all the structural descriptions of a language, producing the deep structure from which the surface structure can be mapped, nothing like a reasonably full treatment has been worked out by the transformationalists or, for that matter, by any other school. It is hardly necessary to add that there is no model of language acquisition or language universals (Chomsky's concept of the „explanatory adequacy" of a linguistic theory) that is accepted by all linguists.

Not only, then, is there no agreement about how language is learned, or what the grammar of English actually is, but no full case has yet been presented by any of the rival schools. By "full" is meant a more or less complete synchronic description which can be used in the classroom.

Stated in more detail, there is as yet no grammar of English which is

(i) *explicit* (i. e. exhaustive and comprehensive),

(ii) *simple* (i. e. economical, using the minimum of rules to account for the maximum of utterances),

(iii) *consistent* (i. e. reliable, without contradictions and with an absolute minimum of exceptions).

Those approximations to a complete grammar which have been published are the subject of fierce discussion. If this is the situation for the English language despite the 40 years of intense research and debate since Bloomfield's "A Set of Postulates", the grammars of other languages are in a correspondingly weaker state: nothing approaching a full comparison between the mother-tongue and the target language (in this case English, though the above argument applies to all languages) is therefore possible, yet it is essential if a contrastive method of language teaching is used.

Is there but one way?

What can the teacher do in this seemingly impossible dilemma? The differences of opinion mentioned above should teach him above all not to be dogmatic. The very processes involved in language acquisition are not yet known and individual variations in perceptual style and abilities are so great that the psychologist is wary of generalizations about the ways in which language is learnt and so should be taught: pupils learn and teachers teach in different ways and one way is not necessarily better than the others.

Similarly, all grammatical theories can be utilized by the language teacher, for different purposes. Grammatical analyses differ in approach and emphasis—traditionalists stress cognitive *categories,* structuralists stress *forms,* tagmemicists stress *functions,* and transformationalists stress the relationships and contrasts of *sentence types.* There are other grammatical theories, of course, but the others have either not gone beyond the stage of exploratory schemata (Lamb-Gleason's stratificational grammar, for example) or are in effect variations of one of the above four—Halliday's scale-and-category school is, in my contention, so close to tagmemics as to be indistinguishable in the informal and indirect manner in which grammar should be presented in the classroom.

Each of the four major models contributes something towards the understanding and generation of the structure of language; each model is reflected in specific types of drill:—

Grammar Model	*Grammar Drill*
Traditionalist	Parsing
Structuralist (Immediate Constituent)	Completion/Substitution
Tagmemicist	Substitution /Correlational
Transformationalist	Conversion, Expansion and Reduction of Sentences.

In order to avoid any misapprehension, it must be stated that these drills *can* be elicited from the linguistic theories mentioned; but none of the linguists concerned has applied himself to the construction of drills for teaching foreign languages. The association of linguistic schools with certain drill types in our little table is quite "unofficial".

The practical teacher, relying on his own linguistic intuition and pedagogical insight, probably uses all these drill techniques "instinctively" and so covers most aspects of structure, in a rather eclectic and empiricist manner. This is all to the good, but his practice will be blind unless he understands something of the underlying theory. And here no proponents disagree, neither those holding differing linguistic theories nor those believing in conflicting pedagogical practices: the better we know grammar, in the widest sense of the term (phonology, syntax and lexis), the more proficiently we should be able to understand some of the problems of language learning.

The Superiority of Transformation Grammar.

A moderate eclecticism does not imply that all grammatical theories are of equal validity. The more explicit the model, the more refined the techniques; hence, the more useful the drills. Parsing will not help generate a pattern from a model sentence, but substitution tables will; so it is not surprising to discover that traditional grammar is unreliable as a tool for teaching the organizational skills of language. Immediate-constituent grammars and tagmemics will produce these sentence patterns, but will not reveal the kernel sentence-string underlying the differing forms of the interrogative, negative, positive, emphatic, etc.; nor will they show the deep identity that obtains, for example, between active and passive voice or between regular and permuted word order. "I gave the boy the book" and "I gave the book to the boy" have the same deep structure: they are merely examples of re-ordering, with the differences between them quite superficial. Yet they must appear as two quite distinct patterns in structuralist and tagmemic grammars, although their meanings are exactly the same. Only transformational-generative grammar can perform these operations and clarify these concepts.

Another example is the elliptical sentence, that dilemma of structuralist grammar, which was never able to explain it adequately. It is now explained as a deletion transformation, with its derivation described formally by transformational and semantically by traditional grammar. In its attention to derivation (earlier, "lost" forms), transformationalism shows itself in sympathy with traditionalism and thus brings us full circle in the history of linguistic theories. Transformational-generative grammar shows the process of production, not just the surface result (structuralism) or the vague semantic correlation (traditionalism).

Linguistic Universals

When psycholinguistic research has progressed further, we are quite likely to find that substitutions and transformations are the ways the child acquires his mother-tongue. If this be so, these activities may well prove to constitute that innate neurological predisposition to language which humans, and only humans, possess. We may find, after all, that there are such things as universals in language. Phonological universals certainly exist, since all known languages are realized by a limited number of distinct phonological features; and Greenberg and other scholars in the United States have produced an impressive list of grammatical universals, including the categories of noun and verb and the functions of subject and predicate. Since they are universal, there will be no need to teach them formally in a second-language course. But this concept of "substantive grammatical universals" is not so immediately relevant to the language teacher, although it certainly will be at the back of his mind in planning his syllabus. What is far more interesting to him is the concept of universals of operational procedure (i.e. substitutions and transformations) – "formal universals".

Universals and Drills

Circumstances are very different for the second-language learner vis-a-vis the native speaker. Both use these procedural, "formal" universals, but the massive exposure to the language together with the absence of interference from another language system does not oblige the native speaker to undergo the intensive drills which the foreign learner must work through. This is an important difference between first- and second-language learning and counters the undoubted similarities between their learning processes.

Assuming, then, that these "formal universals" exist, we can use substitution and transformation drills in our teaching (together with repetition and completion drills, which have somewhat different aims), trusting not only that they are reliable and valid but that they do not conflict with each other theoretically. And, significantly enough, the most recent developments in grammatical theory show a gradual convergence of thought: tagmemic-substitution grammarians recognize the place of transformations (as in Longacre's work) and transformationalists propound syntactic features (Chomsky: *Aspects of the theory of syntax)* which select a certain subcategory (e.g. an abstract noun) to fill a given place (the "slot" of tagmemics) as subject or object of a verb (the "function" of tagmemics) in a sentence.

A Note of Warning

Despite all the theoretical justification for classroom practices discussed above and despite the undoubted and obvious relevance of linguistics to lan-

guage-teaching, linguistics is only one of the sciences involved in language-teaching, and the teacher must be just as concerned with these extra-linguistic factors.

Furthermore, linguistic theories are theories of language competence—they describe the regular systems of the language, the underlying rules. They do not describe performance, the actual use of the language in a situation, with all the variations and deviations implicit therein. There may be a kind of structuralism which only describes performance—and is thereby invalidated precisely because it does not teach the language system as such.

This focus on competence is common to traditionalism and transformationalism. But the traditionalist grammar of a language is a conglomeration of rules and exceptions with little inter-relationship and usually with whole areas of the language left unexplained and dependent on the intuition of the speaker or learner. Transformational-generative grammar is an explicit and coherent theory, seeking the unity of the system and the description of these intuitive processes. At the same time, no teacher should conclude that his task is limited to imparting a knowledge of the formal algorithms of transformationalism instead of the rules of traditionalism. $S \rightarrow NP + VP$ should not appear on the blackboard (unless it be a class of budding language teachers). Teaching should be done inductively, through performance.

Since linguistics cannot be the sole guide in the class and since it cannot supply a full and agreed version of the language system in theory (the "competence model") or in practice (the "performance model"), the teacher modifies and adapts linguistic theories on the basis of an eclectic pragmatism. One must not forget, however, that such a stance presupposes a good acquaintance with the relevant linguistic theories.

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